



KAHO'OLawe ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION

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News Release

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KAHO'OLawe ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION RECEIVES FUNDING FOR MASSIVE DEBRIS CLEAN UP EFFORT

**\$100,000 from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will
be utilized to clean up and maintain Kanapou Bay on Kaho'olawe**

For decades, the island of Kaho'olawe has been tortured by the actions of human beings. Some are documented and well known. Ranching led to overgrazing which resulted in severe erosion. From 1941 until 1990, the U.S. Navy and U.S. allies utilized the island as a live-fire training area, dropping untold amounts of bombs and other munitions on the land and surrounding waters.

But yet another insidious man-made problem, not nearly as well known, is the existence of an estimated 20 tons of marine debris at Kanapou Bay on the island's eastern shore.

The Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) will receive \$100,000 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to finally clean up the mess and attempt to keep it that way. KIRC will match the funding with volunteer and staff resources to undertake the enormous project.

Northeast trade winds , prevailing currents and their funneling effects have choked the five-mile bay, and in particular, the five-acre Keoneuli Beach, with tons of derelict fishing gear, nets, plastics and other debris from the Pacific Ocean. The trash has threatened coral reefs and ruined the habitat of a wide variety of endangered and threatened marine life including the Hawaiian monk seal, the green and hawksbill sea turtles, the humpback whale and seabirds

such as the Hawaiian Dark-rumped Petrel and Newell's Shearwater. These marine creatures, along with sharks and other predators, marine mammals and rays, can ingest and become entangled in marine debris.

“When you see the scope of the problem it is hard to know where to start,” said KIRC Deputy Director Michele McLean. For years, she said, KIRC volunteers have participated in annual debris removal events that each remove many tons of materials from the environment. “But once a year events are simply not enough to clean the entire beach, so we have not been able to keep up with re-accumulation.” The NOAA funding not only seeks to “completely” clean the area which, KIRC officials admit is a “huge undertaking,” but to offer an opportunity to get ahead of the problem and maintain the area so the bay can once again become a clean, healthy habitat for wildlife.

The first cleanup is scheduled for September 25, 2010 and the project is expected to take 18 months. KIRC officials estimate it will take 150 volunteers to clean up the beach and implement upland erosion control projects during five debris removal events. Volunteers will access the beach via one of KIRC's sea vessels after the project area has been thoroughly swept by KIRC Unexploded Ordnance Specialists. The debris will be sorted with some being utilized for erosion control projects currently underway on Kaho`olawe, some separated for recycling and some for study by KIRC staff. The majority will be taken by helicopter to Maui for disposal.

KIRC officials say once the cycle has been broken, regular, annual clean up projects should keep the area clear.

“It is KIRC's vision that through careful and cooperative stewardship – traditional Hawaiian values of resource care and management, or *mālama*, blended with contemporary marine science – Kaho`olawe can become a living conduit between past and future generations of Hawai`i's people,” said KIRC Executive Director Michael Nāho`opi`i. “Kaho`olawe can become a place where traditional resource values will again take root, producing ever greater resources for our future.”

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Marine debris covers Keoneuli Beach at Kanapou Bay on Kaho`olawe's eastern shore.

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The **Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission** (KIRC) was established by the Hawai'i State Legislature in 1993 to manage the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve while it is held in trust for a future Native Hawaiian sovereign entity. The KIRC establishes policies and usage of the island and its surrounding waters through comprehensive restoration and monitoring programs. The KIRC Cultural Program integrates a Native Hawaiian cultural perspective into all programs and activities. The organization is managed by a seven-member Commission and a committed staff. For more information, call 808.243.5020 or visit www.kahoolawe.hawaii.gov.